

which is based upon the Koran, and is administered by religious teachers, takes cognisance chiefly of civil cases, and its administration is nearly as corrupt as that of the *Urf*. Law, in the sense in which we understand it, as the avenger of wrong and the sublimely impartial protector of individual rights and liberties, has no existence at all in Persia.

The curse of the country is venal mal-administration.

It meets one at every turn, and in protean shapes.

There is no official conscience, and no public opinion to act as a check upon official unscrupulousness. Of

Government as an institution for the good of the

governed there is no conception. The greed, which is

among the most painful features of Persian character,

finds its apotheosis in officialism. From the lowest to

the highest rounds of the official ladder unblushing

bribery is the *inodus operandi* of promotion.

It is very obvious that the Shah himself is the

Government. He is an absolute despot, subject to no

controlling influences but the criticisms of the European

press, and the demands of the European Legations. He

is the sole executive. His ministers are but servants of

the highest grade, whose duties consist in carrying out

his orders. The lives and properties of all his subjects

are held only at his pleasure. His sons are but his tools,

to be raised or degraded at his will, and the same may

be said of the highest personages in the Empire. The

Shah is the State,—irresponsible and all-powerful.

Nasr-ed-Din is a most diligent ruler. No

pleasures,
not even the chase, to which he is devoted,
divert his
attention from business. He takes the
initiative in
all policy, guides with a firm hand the
destinies of
Persia, supervises every department,
appoints directly to
all offices of importance, and by means known
to absolute
rulers has his eyes in every part of his
dominions. He